



Taming Adrenaline

Surefire Strategies for
Overcoming Speaking Anxiety

Video Series

Part 1: Introduction

Part 2: On-the-Spot Remedies

Part 3: Avoiding the “Tells” of Nervousness

Part 4: Long-term Strategies



Brought to you by Cara Hale Alter, founder of SpeechSkills and author of *The Credibility Code: How to Project Confidence and Competence When It Matters Most*. For more tips, videos, training options, and free resources, visit speechskills.com/LeanIn

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Part 2: On-the-Spot Remedies

Key Takeaways

Your limbic brain, which is responsible for the fight-or-flight reaction, responds more readily to physical stimuli than to rational thought.

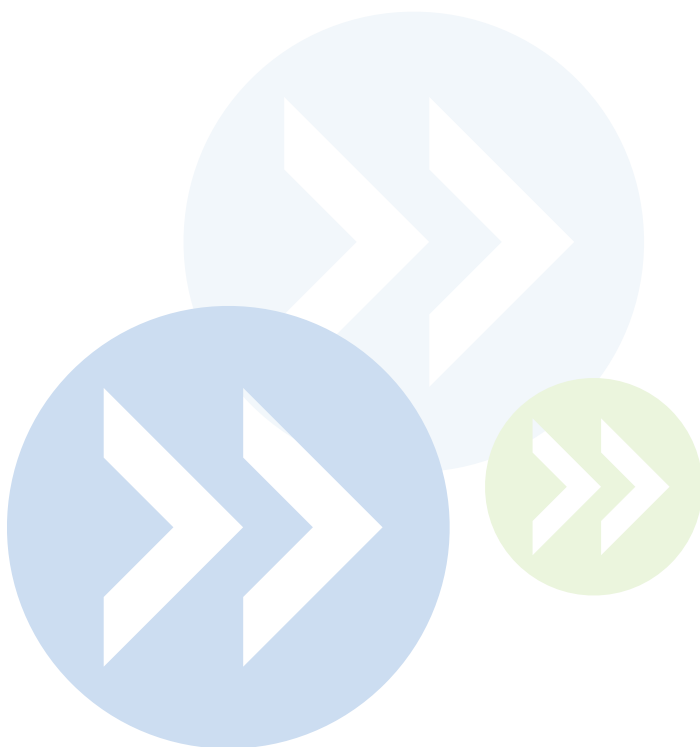
Here are four *physical* things you can do to lower the adrenaline in your system:

1. Take up space. Counteract the tendency to get smaller under pressure and get bigger instead. Taking on a strong, high-status posture increases testosterone (the power hormone) and decreases cortisol (the stress hormone).

2. Focus your eyes. When adrenaline hits, your eyes may start to dart to the periphery in search of a viable escape route. (Prey behavior.) Keep your eyes on the horizon with your nose and eyes pointing in the same direction. (Predator behavior.)

3. Breathe. When the fight-or-flight response hits, your abdominal muscles tighten to protect your vital organs. As a result, your breath becomes more rapid and shallow. Consciously release your abdominal muscles and take long, slow inhalations.

4. Take your time. The easiest way to take control of time is to pause. Not only will it help you feel more relaxed, but also research shows that people who pause are perceived as better prepared, more comfortable, and easier to understand.



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Discussion Questions

- Think about the last time you experienced speaking anxiety. What strategies did you use to try to bring your anxiety under control? How effective were they?

- Now that you know that your adrenaline level is influenced by your physical behaviors, what is your “action plan” for the next time you experience speaking anxiety?

- Can you identify any moments in your life when a rush of adrenaline felt good?
(*Winning an award, talking to someone you are attracted to, competing in a sport, riding a roller coaster, watching a scary movie, being praised or acknowledged, kayaking . . .*) What differentiates these experiences from moments when an adrenaline rush feels “wrong” or “bad”?



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Part 2: On-the-Spot Remedies

ACTIVITY 1:

Practice the Physical Remedies

Take a few moments to experience each of the physical remedies outlined in this segment:

1. Intentionally take up space. Sit with a firm, tall spine and allow your gestures to move freely in the bubble of space in front of you.
2. Next, with your head level, take a moment to look at each individual at the table. Imagine that you have a red laser pointer attached to your nose. The red dot of your laser should land directly on the nose of the person you are looking at.
3. Finally, breathe into your abdominal area with long, slow breaths. Notice if these behaviors have an impact on your sense of well-being. Continue to practice these behaviors while playing the “Snap Two!” game.

ACTIVITY 2:

Play “Snap Two!”

To increase your comfort level with pausing, take turns talking for one minute about your hometown, pausing to snap your fingers twice at the end of each sentence. Be cautious not to allow accidental fillers to slip within the pause.

Once you’ve completed the practice round, see if you can insert two-snap pauses at the ends of your sentences without actually snapping your fingers.

ACTIVITY 3:

Plan Ahead

Take a moment to think through your calendar for the next week. Do you have an activity coming up that might produce some unwanted adrenaline? If so, envision using the above remedies before and during the event. Share the specific behaviors you intend to use and when.
